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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000381

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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (03/05): PALESTINIANS:
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST "FOIL" SETTLEMENT EXPANSION

Main Stories:

All papers lead with photos of Secretary Clinton and Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas warmly shaking hands at their March 4 meeting in Ramallah. Papers report that the two leaders had, "comprehensive discussions." The dailies extensively report on Clintons' and Abbas' remarks from the joint press conference. Headlines highlight agreement by the U.S. and PA over support for the two-state solution and President Abbas' remarks opposing Israeli settlement policies. In response to Clinton's remarks that the U.S. will not deal with Hamas until they meet Middle East Quartet conditions, Hamas spokesperson Taher Al Non told the press that the U.S. has not changed its policies and remains biased towards Israel.

All front pages report that Secretary Clinton met with Palestinian Authority Premier Fayyad in Ramallah on March 4. In discussions, Fayyad demanded a halt to Israeli settlement activities while Clinton expressed appreciation for the achievements of the Palestinian government, according to coverage. Clinton also visited AMIDEAST in Ramallah, front pages report, where she met with Palestinian youths and gave interviews to young Palestinian media broadcasters. Papers highlight that the Secretary also unveiled plans to continue funding for the "YES" exchange program and increase funding for other educational exchanges, including programs for undergraduate Palestinian students.

Al Ayyam's front page runs statements by Palestinian Authority President Abbas responding to Iranian statements calling for a Palestinian revolution and resistance against Israel. Abbas is quoted asking Iran, "to mind its own business," and not interfere in Palestinian affairs. All papers quote Secretary Clinton telling journalists aboard her plane en route to Brussels that the Iranian statements are "flagrant interference" in Palestinian affairs.

Al Quds' front page quotes Chief Palestinian Authority Negotiator Ahmad Quray stating that negotiations with Israel remain on hold until there is "substantial change" to Israeli policies. Meanwhile all front pages run AFP coverage about a report in British Lancet medical magazine claiming that the health of Palestinians living in the Palestinian Territories has deteriorated due to Israeli restrictions.

Demolitions orders are again front page news in Al Quds. The paper reports that the Israeli military on March 4 ordered the demolition of 20 Palestinian houses and agricultural structures in Aqraba village near Nablus in the West Bank. In a separate front page article, the paper reports that an Israeli Jerusalem municipal court issued a stay on demolition orders of houses in East Jerusalem's Ras Khmais area on March 4. The order expires in 72 hours, papers note.

Al Ayyam's front page reports that a young Palestinian sustained serious injuries when he "wrestled with" Israeli soldiers who were "torturing" his 55-year old father near the West Bank Bitu village in Nablus district.

The three papers report that an Israeli military air strike on a Palestinian car near Jabaliyah in Gaza killed a senior Islamic Jihad militant on March 4. Israeli air strikes also targeted smuggling tunnels near the Gaza-Egypt borders on March 4, papers report.-----

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Taysir Zabiri opines in Al Quds under the title, "Parallel lines - one solution"(03/05): "If Palestinian national agreement and a united Arab stand were realized, and if international, economic and political support [for Palestinians] continued, the incoming Israeli

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extreme right government [would find itself increasingly isolated] and its expansion plans that violate Palestinian rights, would be foiled."

2) Talal Okal writes in Al Ayyam under the title, "What was absent from the Sharm El-Sheikh conference"(03/05): "He is mistaken who bets on Washington being able to "change" Israeli policy [towards Palestinians]... The conference should have addressed issues related to Israel, including guarantees to facilitate Gaza reconstruction. Then we could believe that there is some integrity and sense of justice in the international community."

WALLES